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Executive Registry

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SPEECH BY
WILLIAM J. CASEY

FOR THE
25TH ANNIVERSARY OF PROJECT CORONA

18 AUGUST 1985

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, ON BEHALF OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AND
OTHER ORGANIZATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR NATION'S RECONNAISSANCE ACTIVITIES, I
WELCOME YOU TO THIS GATHERING.

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TODAY MARKS THE ANNIVERSARY OF A VERY SIGNIFICANT EVENT IN THE HISTORY OF
OUR NATION'S INTELLIGENCE-GATHERING WORK. TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, ON 18 AUGUST
1960, THE FIRST FILM FROM AN ORBITING RECONNAISSANCE SATELLITE WAS RECOVERED
FROM SPACE. ALTHOUGH IT DID NOT APPROACH THE QUALITY OF PHOTOGRAPHY OBTAINED
BY THE U-2, THIS FIRST SATELLITE FILM PROVED THAT RECONNAISSANCE FROM SPACE WAS
POSSIBLE.

MY PREDECESSOR, ALLEN DULLES, PRESIDED OVER TWO EXTRAORDINARILY IMPORTANT
RECONNAISSANCE DEVELOPMENTS -- THE HIGH-FLYING U-2 AND A-12 AIRCRAFT AND A
SATELLITE SYSTEM CALLED CORONA. ALTHOUGH WHEN HE RETIRED AS DCI IN 1961, THE
BENEFITS FROM THE SYSTEMS THAT EVOLVED FROM CORONA SATELLITES WERE STILL ONLY
POTENTIAL, BY THE TIME I ASSUMED THIS OFFICE IN 1981, IMPROVEMENTS HAD PUSHED
RECONNAISSANCE TECHNOLOGY TO ASTONISHING NEW ACHIEVEMENTS.

THIS SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS HAS MADE MY EFFORTS AS
PRESIDENT REAGAN'S INTELLIGENCE ADVISOR, IF NOT EASIER, AT LEAST SEVERAL DEGREES
MORE ACCURATE AND CONSIDERABLY SWIFTER. NO LONGER MUST WE SUFFER THE ANXIETIES

AND CONCERNS

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AND CONCERNS ABOUT LOSING A RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT OVER SOVIET TERRITORY. TODAY'S SPACE-RECONNAISSANCE SYSTEMS CAN ROUTINELY SURVEY EVERY PART OF OUR GLOBE ACROSS MOST OF THE VISUAL AND RADIO SPECTRUM.

ALTHOUGH OBTAINED FROM THE DISTANT SECURITY OF SPACE, EARLY CORONA IMAGERY WAS SLOWER AND LESS CURRENT THAN U-2 PHOTOGRAPHY. AS SOON AS A U-2 AIRCRAFT COMPLETED A MISSION, ITS FILM COULD BE DEVELOPED. WITH THE EARLY SATELLITES, HOWEVER, IT SOMETIMES TOOK WEEKS AFTER A PICTURE WAS EXPOSED BEFORE ANALYSTS COULD SEE THE RESULTS. TODAY, THE DELAY BETWEEN PICTURE-TAKING AND ANALYSIS IS A MATTER OF HOURS

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OF COURSE, NONE OF TODAY'S ADVANCES WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE PERSEVERANCE OF A NOBLE FEW DURING THOSE FRUSTRATING MONTHS OF SUCCESSIVE DISAPPOINTMENTS IN 1959 AND 1960. LIKE ANY PATHFINDER, THE CORONA PROGRAM SUFFERED A NUMBER OF FAILURES BEFORE ACHIEVING A PHENOMENAL RECORD FOR RELIABILITY AND SUCCESS.

I AM HONORED TO WELCOME THIS GATHERING OF SO MANY WHO WERE PIONEERS IN OUR SATELLITE RECONNAISSANCE PROGRAMS. YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS HAVE BEEN TRULY EARTH-REVEALING. SOME OF YOU HAVE WORKED IN THE OVERHEAD RECONNAISSANCE FIELD FOR MORE THAN FOUR DECADES. OTHERS HAVE SERVED IN ADVISORY CAPACITIES FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY. IN SELECTING TODAY'S HONOREES, WE HAVE TRIED TO RECOGNIZE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THOSE WHO PROVIDED THE BASIC THEORIES, TO THOSE WHO PREACHED THE NEED -- THE "KEEPERS OF THE FLAME" -- TO THOSE WHO DESIGNED AND BUILT THE DEVICES. YOUR NUMBER INCLUDES MEN WHO HELPED KEEP CORONA SECRET AND A FEW WHO WITHSTOOD INTENSE CRITICISM DURING THE LONG MONTHS OF FAILURES AND YET CONTINUED TO ENCOURAGE THE PHYSICISTS AND ENGINEERS, THE MATHEMATICIANS

AND TECHNICIANS

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AND TECHNICIANS WHO WERE DESIGNING AND BUILDING THE ROCKETS, THE SPACECRAFT, AND THE CAMERAS THAT EVENTUALLY BROUGHT SUCCESS.

SINCE FOR REASONS OF SECURITY, WE CANNOT DRAW PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THIS COMMEMORATION, WE DECIDED IT WOULD NOT BE PRUDENT FOR EITHER PRESIDENT REAGAN OR VICE PRESIDENT BUSH TO JOIN US HERE TODAY IN PERSON. TO CONVEY HIS DEEP GRATITUDE FOR ALL OF YOUR EFFORTS, HOWEVER, PRESIDENT REAGAN HAS SENT ME A LETTER AND ASKED ME TO READ IT TO ALL OF YOU.

READ PRESIDENT'S LETTER

NOW, LET ME TURN THE PROGRAM BACK TO PETE ALDRIDGE. TODAY IS NOT ONLY THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CULMINATION OF THE CORONA PROGRAM. IT IS ALSO THE BIRTHDAY OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NRO WHO IS TODAY CARRYING ~~ON~~ YOUR PIONEERING WORK BRILLIANTLY INTO THE FUTURE. LET'S GIVE PETE ALDRIDGE A BIRTHDAY SALUTE.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 18, 1985

Dear Bill:

Although I cannot be with you in person today, I did not want to miss the opportunity to join in honoring the people who have participated in Project CORONA for the past 25 years.

No words can adequately convey the respect and gratitude that I feel, and I am sure that all Americans would feel if they could know, of the dedication and selflessness of the people who have given so much to the security of the United States.

Through their work, I can request photographs of almost any area of the surface of the earth and have them in my hands in a matter of hours. It is a feat of which President Eisenhower and those before him could only dream. It was he who played the crucial role in the development of overhead reconnaissance. It was his commitment to and understanding of the vital contribution that reconnaissance could make to our nation's security that provided the impetus to this project 25 years ago.

During the Eisenhower Administration, a new generation of photo-reconnaissance technology was developed that radically changed the entire concept of intelligence gathering. Improved collection -- from reconnaissance balloons to satellites -- has resulted in our acquiring an ever-increasing volume of detailed intelligence crucial to our national security and that of our allies.

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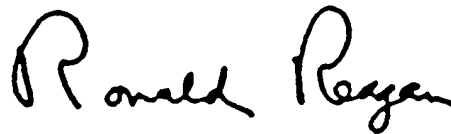
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President Eisenhower once said to the grand old man of this business, General George Goddard, that without aerial reconnaissance: "...you would only have your fears on which to plan your own defense arrangements and your whole military establishment. Now, if you are going to use nothing but fear, ...you are going to make us an armed camp." His statement is no less true today. The knowledge which only overhead reconnaissance can provide is absolutely vital to the security of the United States.

I know that if President Eisenhower could see the fruition of his dream he would feel the same pride and admiration that I do for the people of Project CORONA and join me in extending to them heartfelt thanks for their service and dedication to our country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ronald Reagan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

The Honorable William J. Casey
Director of Central Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

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